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ABSTRACT

Based on a meeting of the Legislative Higher Education Study Committee on January 1998, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges and the Arizona Board of Regents formed a study committee to develop a system for identifying and meeting demonstrated needs statewide in relation to the development of an applied baccalaureate degree program. This document proposes a process for identifying the need for applied baccalaureate degrees, including a request for proposal component. This paper describes the background and context, as well as addresses the need for an applied baccalaureate degree. This process is expected to provide benefits to the community colleges, universities, Board of Regents, and the citizens of the state. The process assures that identified needs for applied baccalaureate programs in the communities served by the college will be seriously addressed. The most desirable outcome will be for a public or private four-year university to come forward and address the need. Only if this fails to happen will the possibility of a community college offering the applied baccalaureate be considered. (JJL)

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Meeting Workforce Development Needs Through Applied Baccalaureate Degrees

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State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona

**Meeting Workforce Development Needs Through
Applied Baccalaureate Degrees**

A Concept Paper by Don Puyear
April 1998

At the final meeting of the Legislative Higher Education Study Committee on January 29, 1998, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges and the Arizona Board of Regents were asked to form a study committee consisting of the thirteen public and private college and university members of the Higher Education Study Committee. This new committee is to "continue the collaborative process that assures the advanced postsecondary education needs of place-bound and time-constrained learners and of employers, including private business, not-for-profit and government, are efficiently and effectively met without displacing students' families or existing employment and without unnecessary duplication of programs." This paper addresses the second point of the charge—to "develop a system for identifying and meeting demonstrated needs statewide..." when that need may be for an applied baccalaureate degree program.

A process is proposed for identifying the need for applied baccalaureate degrees. This process is based on the existing community college curriculum approval procedure with one significant modification—a "request for proposal" component is included. The proposed process assures that the entire higher education community is informed of a potential need for an applied baccalaureate program as soon as that need has been identified. All interested parties will have an opportunity to develop—singularly or in partnership—a response to meet the need. Only if the public and private four-year colleges and universities elect not to respond to the need will the possibility of a community college offering an applied baccalaureate degree be considered. However, that possibility is not excluded.

The paper is based on a conviction that the present State-level boards—the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges—are able and willing to consider a well-developed proposal on its merits and act appropriately for the good of the State as a whole. The authority of each of these boards is maintained or enhanced.

Background and Context

Community College-University Partnerships

Arizona enjoys an unusually rich level of cooperation and partnership between the public universities and community colleges of the state. Examples of this cooperation and partnership can be seen in such undertaking as described below. This list is far from complete but illustrates the fact that community college-university cooperation and partnership is pervasive in Arizona. In each case, planning for and implementation of the programs involves extensive collaboration of community colleges.

NAU/Yuma, where Arizona Western College (a community college) and a Northern Arizona University upper division and graduate center are collocated on the same campus and share libraries and support services.

The University of Arizona branch at Sierra Vista and Cochise College are located adjacent to one another. The community college offers lower division work and the university branch offers upper division and graduate work.

NAU Net offers upper division and graduate programs and classes in conjunction with community colleges throughout the state. Much of this instruction is delivered via interactive instructional television (IITV).

ASU West (an upper division university) and Glendale Community College have developed a college center on the university campus at which the community college teaches lower division classes and facilitates the student's transition to university life.

The University of Phoenix is working collaboratively with several community colleges to expand workforce training opportunities in rural Arizona.

Transfer articulation between Arizona community colleges and the universities of the state is already among the best in the country. Implementation of the present initiatives of the Transfer Articulation Task Force, including the Course Applicability System (CAS), will create a model unmatched elsewhere. The task force will continue to extend and refine the system. Extension of the CAS to include articulation with the private colleges and universities in the state is a likely next step.

Why an Applied Baccalaureate Degree?

For many years certificate and Associate in Applied Science (AAS) Degree programs have met the needs for workforce development, and they remain the mainstays in this arena. However, in some fields the educational needs of the workforce have resulted in larger and larger course content of many AAS degrees, to the point where some can no longer properly be called two-year degrees. Nonetheless, in some of these fields there is a need for a workforce development educational program that goes beyond the scope of even the expanded AAS degree. The Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Engineering Technology emerged more than a decade ago in several states. As the requirements for education and training increase to match the increased sophistication of many jobs, the applied baccalaureate is increasingly the degree of choice. The applied baccalaureate addresses a different need than the traditional Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. In many ways, it has a similar relationship to the BA or BS degree that the AAS degree has to the AA or AS degree. They both have similar rigor and length, but they have different purposes.

The universities and the Arizona Board of Regents have recognized the desirability and propriety of the applied baccalaureate degree. Both ASU-East and NAU have recently received permission from the Regents to develop such degrees. In both cases, the degree development is on a fast track with implementation likely by the next academic year. This is a most encouraging development. It is likely that one or the other of these degrees will be able to be adapted to satisfy many of the needs

identified through this proposed process.

What is an Applied Baccalaureate Degree?

An applied baccalaureate degree has the following characteristics:

The degree is called a Bachelor of Applied Science or Bachelor of Applied Technology, depending on its scope.

The program of study consists of between 120 and approximately 126 semester credit hours.

The program focuses on skills and knowledge required for the workforce.

The degree program responds to well-documented needs of students and employers.

The degree program has well-defined learning outcomes and competencies.

The degree program is an extension of an existing community college Associate in Applied Science degree.

The degree may be conferred by a public or private four-year college or university or by a community college.

The Proposed Process

The following procedure recognizes that community colleges are closely attuned to the needs and opportunities in workforce development within their service areas. It makes only minor modifications to the curriculum approval process already in place for community college certificate and associate degree programs. The modifications are necessary to assure that four-year colleges and universities are invited to participate in the process at the earliest stages and are given every possible opportunity to respond to the need for an applied baccalaureate degree program. The proposal assumes that it

will be a community college that first identifies the need but it can be readily adapted in the event that it is a four-year college or university that starts the process.

Early Alert

When a community college identifies a need for an applied baccalaureate program, it will alert the educational community of this fact through the established "Early Alert" process. This process is expanded to include distribution of the alert to the Arizona Board of Regents and the chief academic officers (Provosts) of all regionally accredited public or private four-year colleges and universities in the state. At the time of the initial "Early Alert," only the need for the program will have been established. Any four-year college or university having an interest in responding to the need would be invited to contact the college issuing the alert.

The community college and the employers or employee groups supporting the need (along with any interested four-year colleges or universities) will develop documentation of the need for the program, the number and location of potential students, the learning outcomes required of graduates of the program, and any special requirements concerning modes of delivery and scheduling.

Request for Proposal

One step not included in the normal associate degree or certificate curriculum approval process is added. At least 90 days before the date when the program would be considered by the State Board the community college, with approval of its District Governing Board, would issue a formal request for proposal detailing, at a minimum, the information described in the previous paragraph. Colleges and universities would have 60 days to respond to the request for proposal. Responses will be evaluated for adequacy and responsiveness. If a public or private four-year college or university can and will, in the opinion of the community college identifying the need, respond adequately to the need they will be given the task of offering the degree and no further approval is needed on the part of the community college. More than one four-year college or university could develop degree programs if they chose to do so. The university or four-year college would seek approval of the proposed program on an expedited basis and would be expected to have the program in operation within 180

days from the time the decision was made that it, rather than the community college, should offer the program.

Final Alert

If no university or four-year college is able or willing to respond to the need or if, in the opinion of the community college, the proposals of the universities and four-year colleges are inadequate, the community college, with the approval of its District Governing Board, may seek approval of the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges to confer the applied baccalaureate degree. The existing Final Alert process will be used except that the process would be expanded to include distribution of the alert information to the Arizona Board of Regents and the chief academic officers (Provosts) of all regionally accredited public or private four-year colleges and universities in the state.

State Board Approval

If the college demonstrates that (1) it has met all the requirements of the curriculum approval process, (2) due notice has been given to all public and private regionally accredited four-year colleges and universities in the state as described in the early alert and request for proposal procedures, and (3) no acceptable proposal has been received from the four-year colleges or universities, the State Board may consider the request for the community college to offer the degree program. A public hearing will be scheduled in conjunction with the consideration of this request. If the State Board concludes that (1) the need for the degree program has been established, (2) there has been no adequate response to the request for proposal, and (3) the community colleges has the resources to properly present the program, it may approve the program and request that the Arizona Board of Regents authorize the community college to confer the applied baccalaureate degree. The governance and oversight of a community college authorized to confer an applied baccalaureate degree would remain with the District Governing Board and the State Board.

As a part of its presentation, the community college will demonstrate that it is accredited by the North Central Association to confer the applied baccalaureate degree, or that it may reasonably be expected to achieve this accreditation within two years.

Arizona Board of Regents Authorization

Upon approval by the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges, the college and the State Board will refer the matter to the Arizona Board of Regents who may authorize the community college to confer the specific applied baccalaureate degree.

Required Legislation

Since this process uses existing boards and includes only minor modifications to established procedures, the only legislation required is an authorization for community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees with the approval of the Board of Regents. This could best be handled by a simple statement, probably included within the Chapter dealing with the Board of Regents, that says something to the order of "Notwithstanding the provisions of A.R.S. § 15-1401, The Arizona Board of Regents may, upon request of the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges, authorize a community college under the jurisdiction of the State Board to confer an applied baccalaureate degree."

To demonstrate that the process is functioning, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges and the Arizona Board of Regents should provide the Legislature an annual report on the status of all applied baccalaureate proposals for which an "Early Alert" had been issued.

Benefits of the Proposed Process

The process proposed in this paper provides significant benefits to community colleges, universities, the Arizona Board of Regents, and the citizens of the state.

Community Colleges

The process assures that identified needs for applied baccalaureate programs in the communities served by the college will be seriously addressed. The most desirable outcome will be for a public or

private four-year college or university to come forward to address the need. Only if this fails to happen will the community college be called upon to do so.

Four-year Colleges and Universities

The process assures that interested four-year colleges and universities can be involved in the analysis of need and in the development of a response from the very beginning.

The Arizona Board of Regents

The authority of the Board of Regents to determine which public institutions should confer baccalaureate degrees remains undiminished.

Arizona's Workforce

The biggest beneficiaries of this process are Arizona workers and their employers. Their needs for increased educational and training opportunities are assured of prompt and appropriate consideration and response.